

would like a defensive alliance, or at any rate an arrangement like that existing between England and France, agreeing what each country would do in certain eventualities. It would be useful to arrange for the co-operation of the fleets. Nicolson thought that a discussion on the French model between the naval staffs, without in any way binding the Governments, would have great advantages. Grey's reaction was more cautious. " If the French agreed, we might let the Russians know what has passed between military and naval authorities on each side, but we had better postpone discussion of anything as long as we can." There was, however, no escape from our importunate friends. Nicolson was informed that Sazonoff had asked Doumergue, the Premier and Foreign Minister, to speak to Grey about a defensive alliance or a naval convention. ^{cc} It is a very delicate matter/* minuted Grey on Nicolson's report, " and I am glad to be warned, but it is possible that it is the French who have inspired the Russians with the idea. It is curious that the Russians should be suggesting more than the French have got from us."

For the first and last time Grey accompanied the Sovereign on a State visit, and the intimacy of the Anglo-French entente was emphasized in every possible way. His report of the conversations is brief and colourless, but the French documents provide a detailed account by Doumergue himself.

Here is a brief summary :

Doumergue : We have confidence in the friendship of England, and I am sure she would not fail us in the hour of peril. I merely remark how abnormal it is that, while France has naval arrangements with England and Russia, there is no co-ordination between the three. Could not England do with Russk what she has done with us ?

Grey : As regards military co-operation we have done all we can with you.

Doumergue : Of course, and therefore I only have naval activity in mind. Your country and mine have envisaged the co-operation of our squadrons in the North Sea. That is no obstacle to co-operation with Russia in the Baltic. Indeed, the latter is the logical consequence of the former.

Grey : Very well, we might begin by telling Russia of the conversations between our General Staffs and then ask: What have you to say ?

Doumergue : I quite approve this procedure.

Grey : I will speak to Asquith and recommend the plan.